Salt of the Earth

FRANK MANN, whom many persons consider the best farmer in America, on his farm at Gilman, Illinois.

Discovers Lost Indian Art

"I AM one of the last of the old-time naturalists, who knew a little of most everything and not much of anything."

This is the homely characterization which Halvor L. Skavlem makes of himself. A prototype of John Burroughs of Slab Sides, this farmer, naturalist, ornithologist and archeologist lives on a farm near the banks of Lake Koshkonong in Southern Wisconsin. In this vicinity he has spent most of his life. As a farm boy he gathered butterflies and birds, studied the botanical specimens of the regions and became interested in scientific farming. As he grew to manhood his scientific turn of mind developed in channels of nature study.

The Lake Koshkonong region is rich in Indian lore. Here gathered the Indian tribes of the Middle West on their way to the famous Indian ceremonial grounds at Aztalan, only a few miles away. Here according to Professor Thure Kumlin, the naturalist, are to be found more distinct specimens of birds than in any other like community in the Northwest. Here amid placid waters, dense wood lots and a ground carpeted with a velvety grass Mr. Skavlem has lived a life of community usefulness.

Mr. Skavlem is not afraid of an idea. In his younger days, during the farmers' war on monopolies, known as the Granger movement of the early 70's, Skavlem was a persistent advocate of leading reform measures. He believed in the control of railroads, and now looks back across a space of over half a century, pleased to see nearly every important reform measure which he then advocated written in the statute books of the state and nation. He is still on the firing line of reform measures and likes to be referred to as "unsafe and dangerous" by the "moss-back." He has been a leader in the good roads movement, an advocate of more libraries and in general community betterment. He delves in science and literature and strives to solve world problems by common yardsticks of experience.

As a naturalist he has made a collection of fine specimens of nearly every bird known in the Badger State excepting the Carolina Paroquet, which has never been seen in Wisconsin by any reliable observer since the late 40's. There are nearly 357 specimens in the exhibition including some which are now extinct, as the wild turkey of the pheasant family and the passenger pigeon.

H. L. SKAVLEM chipping an arrow out of stone with the tooth of a muskrat.

It was in unraveling the mystery by which the Indians made their flint and stone implements that Mr. Skavlem recently attracted attention. At his summer home at Carcejou Hunting and Fishing Lodge, Lake Koshkonong, Mr. Skavlem has made arrowheads of flint and jasper just as delicate and perfect in design as any made by masters of the Indian art. In fashioning the articles no steel or metal implements are used but only the tooth of a muskrat or the bone of some wild animal. He places the flint to be shaped across the edge of a block of wood with the edge of stone at a slight angle. Then with deft movement, the real secret of the Indian mystery, and acquired only by great effort, he works with the bone tool which he holds in his right hand.

—Fred L. Holmes.

A Wonderful Farmer

FRANK MANN, brother to James R. Mann of Congressional fame, is often called "the best farmer in America." Among those granting him this distinction is no less an agricultural authority than Dean Davenport, of the University of Illinois.

To his close friends, the Congressman is known as an enthusiastic lover and grower of plants. Hundreds of the shrubs growing on the lawns of his neighbors on Chicago's South Side got their start in the Mann gardens. Frank Mann's agricultural interest, however, is no spare time proposition. It consists of the full-time, full-fledged business of operating a remarkable farm of five hundred acres at Gilman, Illinois.

Bois d'Arc Farm, as his place is known, probably is the most productive agricultural area of its size in the Middle West. Here are regularly produced yields from three to four times as large as the average of the United States.

Mr. Mann's average acre yield of corn, the last ten years, has been more than seventy-five bushels. Of oats the average has been better than eighty bushels, while his wheat has averaged about fifty-four bushels to the acre. A field of oats on Bois d'Arc Farm yielded one hundred and fifteen bushels an acre one year. Mann also has produced ninety-three bushels of corn as the acre average of a field, and sixty-three bushels of wheat.

That production of sixty-three bushels of wheat to the acre is Mr. Mann's best crop achievement thus far. This was made in 1918—as an extra contribution, it would seem, to the wartime food needs of America and her Allies. From another field the same year he harvested sixty-one bushels for every acre.

But he isn't stopping contentedly with his sixty-three bushel record, even if it is extraordinary. The remarkable fact in Mr. Mann's farming is that the productive ability of his land is constantly increasing instead of diminishing. His yields have steadily grown larger for many years, and apparently there is no limit to them.

Mr. Mann assumed the management of Bois d'Arc Farm soon after graduating from the University of Illinois in 1876. For many years he tried to increase the yields, putting into practice about every improvement known to the art of agriculture. Despite all this the crop yields remained stationary, and farming grew discouraging.

Then, in 1903, he began a new practice; one that was to revolutionize the methods of thousands of Middle Western farmers as well as his own. He resolved to feed his soil.

About that time some soil tests made by the state university seemed to indicate that the stationary and decreasing yields were due to the absence in proper amount of certain essentials of plant food. This shoe seemed to fit Mr. Mann's farming, and he promptly put it on. He began to put the elements of soil fertility which are used rapidly into the soil faster than his crops could take them out. To this end he has applied regularly and religiously large quantities of rock phosphate and ground limestone to his soil, and turned under great crops of legumes to maintain the nitrogen supply.

Frank Mann's contribution to the agriculture of the nation may well be credited to the fact that he never has been too old to learn or adopt new methods. He was nearly fifty when he began the soil fertilizing practice that has meant so much to him and to his brother farmers. He already has lived to see his dream of steadily increasing yields come true, not only on Bois d'Arc Farm but on hundreds of others where his methods have been employed. —Frank M. Chase.

Bees and the Bible

A FARMER has no respect for a preacher who doesn't know something about farming.

Believe that or not, it comes straight from a preacher who is a farm specialist. He is the Rev. Mr. Edward V. Gardner who occupies the pulpit of the Congregational church at Eureka, Kansas.

REV. MR. EDWARD V. GARDNER
Congregational minister of Eureka, Kansas.

His farm specialty is bees. He knows more about them than any farmer in Greenwood County.

"Bees are my graft," the Eureka preacher said recently. "I cash in on them by winning souls. It's practical Christianity, not hot air, that counts. Not long ago I heard a fellow in my county say 'Preachers are the biggest parasites on the body politic.' I laid for a chance to work my graft on him. He was a successful farmer but didn't keep bees. One day I cornered him and gave him a bee talk. He was converted and bought a couple of hives.

"He told me he'd be satisfied if he got enough honey to supply his home needs. I went out and helped him take the honey and there were eighty pounds of it, worth 25 cents a pound.

"He invited me to stay for dinner and we talked bees.

"A few weeks later his children began to come to Sunday School. When a young fellow in the community asked to marry his daughter this man's first question was, 'Are you a Christian?'

"That's the way I cash in on my bees."

Mr. Gardner has two well-equipped shops which he keeps stocked with bee supplies. His equipment includes everything that a farmer would need to start out in the bee business.

He is a deputy state bee inspector. This gives him authority to investigate cases in which he suspects the law is being violated in regard to the industry.

"A few simple directions are all any farmer needs in order to have plenty of honey," Mr. Gardner says. "There are only two or three things to know and nothing practically to do between the time the hives are set up and when the honey is taken out. I always help at these times if my services are requested.

"Thousands of dollars' worth of honey is going to waste annually in the clover and alfalfa fields of Kansas," Mr. Gardner says. "Persuading farmers to keep bees is a good cause, a good 'graft,' affords a pleasant recreation, and takes me out among the people.

—C. E. Rogers.